IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as set forth below:

1. (Currently Amended) A computer accessible storage medium storing a plurality of instructions which, when executed during a restore operation of a database to a computer system, wherein the database describes a computer system configuration, and wherein a first instance of the database is included in backup data being restored and a second instance of the database exists on the computer system:

process one or more first keys of the second instance, the one or more first keys identifying one or more second keys of the second instance, wherein identification by the one or more first keys indicates that the one or more second keys are to be preserved in the database subsequent to the restore operation; ~~and~~

if the computer system's hardware is equivalent to hardware of a source of the backup data, process a third key, wherein the third key overrides a preservation of at least one of the one or more second keys <u>from the second instance, and wherein at least one other one of the one or more second keys remains preserved from the second instance subsequent to processing the third key</u>, wherein each key of a given instance of the database is an identifier used to access information in the given instance<u>;</u> <u>and</u>

<u>merge the first instance and the second instance of the database to generate a third instance, wherein the third instance comprises: (i) each of the one or more second keys from the second instance whose preservation is not overridden by the third key; and (ii) each of the one or more second keys from the first instance whose preservation is overridden by the third key; wherein the third instance comprises at least one second key from the first instance and a least one second key from the second instance.</u>

2

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Currently Amended) The computer accessible storage medium as recited in ~~claim 1~~ <u>claim 1</u> ~~claim 2~~ wherein the plurality of instructions, when executed, restore the third instance to the computer system.

4. (Previously Presented) The computer accessible storage medium as recited in claim 1 wherein the source comprises a second computer system.

5. (Previously Presented) The computer accessible storage medium as recited in claim 1 wherein the source comprises the computer system, via a backup operation performed prior to the restore operation.

6. (Previously Presented) The computer accessible storage medium as recited in claim 1 wherein the one or more first keys comprise a fourth key and a fifth key, wherein the fifth key is processed if the restore operation is an automated system restore operation.

7. (Previously Presented) The computer accessible storage medium as recited in claim 6 wherein the fourth key is unconditionally processed during the restore operation.

8. (Previously Presented) The computer accessible storage medium as recited in claim 1 further storing a second plurality of instructions which, when executed prior to a backup operation on the source, insert the third key into the database if the third key is not found in the database.

9. (Previously Presented) The computer accessible storage medium as recited in claim 8 wherein the second plurality of instructions are executed responsive to an install of the second plurality of instructions and the plurality of instructions on the source.

10. (Previously Presented) A computer system comprising a processor and the computer

accessible storage medium as recited in claim 1, the processor coupled to the computer accessible storage medium and configured to execute the plurality of instructions.

11. (Currently Amended) A method, during a restore operation of a database to a computer system, wherein the database describes a computer system configuration, and wherein a first instance of the database is included in backup data being restored and a second instance of the database exists on the computer system, the method comprising:

> processing one or more first keys of the second instance, the one or more first keys identifying one or more second keys of the second instance, wherein identification by the one or more first keys indicates that the one or more second keys are to be preserved in the database subsequent to the restore;

> determining that the computer system's hardware is equivalent to hardware of a source of the backup data; ~~and~~

> responsive to the determining, processing a third key, wherein the third key overrides a preservation of at least one of the one or more second keys from the second instance, and wherein at least one other one of the one or more second keys remains preserved from the second instance subsequent to processing the third key, wherein each key of a given instance of the database is an identifier used to access information in the given instance; and

> merging the first instance and the second instance of the database to generate a third instance, wherein the third instance comprises: (i) each of the one or more second keys from the second instance whose preservation is not overridden by the third key; and (ii) each of the one or more second keys from the first instance whose preservation is overridden by the third key; wherein the third instance comprises at least one second key from the first instance and a least one second key from the second instance.

4

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in ~~claim 12~~ claim 11 further comprising restoring the third instance to the computer system.

14. (Original) The method as recited in claim 11 wherein the source comprises a second computer system.

15. (Original) The method as recited in claim 11 wherein the source comprises the computer system, via a backup operation performed prior to the restore operation.

16. (Original) The method as recited in claim 11 wherein the one or more first keys comprise a fourth key and a fifth key, wherein processing the one or more first keys comprises processing the fifth key if the restore operation is an automated system restore operation.

17. (Original) The method as recited in claim 16 wherein processing the one or more first keys further comprises unconditionally processing the fourth key.

18. (Original)The method as recited in claim 11 further comprising, prior to a backup operation on the source, inserting the third key into the database if the third key is not found in the database.

19. (Currently Amended) A computer accessible storage medium storing a plurality of instructions which, when executed during a restore operation of a database to a computer system, wherein the database describes a computer system configuration, and wherein a first instance of the database is included in backup data being restored and a second instance of the database exists on the computer system:

   process one or more first keys of the second instance, the one or more first keys

5

identifying one or more second keys of the second instance, wherein identification by the one or more first keys indicates that the one or more second keys are to be preserved in the database subsequent to the restore; and

if the computer system's hardware is equivalent to hardware of a source of the backup data, process a third key, wherein the third key takes precedence over the one or more first keys if a conflict exists between the one or more first keys and the third key, <u>and wherein each second key for which the conflict exists is restored from the first instance instead of preserved from the second instance and each second key for which no conflict exists is restored from the second instance,</u> wherein each key of a given instance of the database is an identifier used to access information in the given instance.

20. (Previously Presented) The computer accessible storage medium as recited in claim 19 wherein the plurality of instructions, when executed, merge the first instance and the second instance of the database to generate a third instance under control of the one or more first keys and, if the computer system's hardware is equivalent to hardware of a source of the backup data, the third key.

21. (Previously Presented) The computer accessible storage medium as recited in claim 19 wherein the plurality of instructions, when executed, restore the third instance to the computer system.

22. (Previously Presented) The computer accessible storage medium as recited in claim 19 wherein the one or more first keys comprise a fourth key and a fifth key, wherein the fifth key is processed if the restore operation is an automated system restore operation, and wherein the fifth key takes precedence over the fourth key if there is conflict between the fifth key and the fourth key.

23. (Previously Presented) The computer accessible storage medium as recited in claim 22 wherein the fourth key is unconditionally processed during the restore operation.

24. (Previously Presented) A computer system comprising a processor and the computer accessible storage medium as recited in claim 19, the processor coupled to the computer accessible storage medium and configured to execute the plurality of instructions.